major's breast, its duplicate to the tree, and then the major raised his voice and gave his orders without a tremor.

"Ready!" Six rifles were brought to six steady shoulders.

"Aim!" There was a prolonged moment of suspense.

"Fire!" Six bullets whizzed through the air and struck together in the tree with a thud.

A sergeant who was detailed for that duty examined the heart and then approached the colonel with a salute.

"There are six bullet holes in the heart, sir," he said.

The colonel nodded. "You may take your post, sir," he replied. Then, still in an unmoved voice, he went on: "Proceed, Major Freeland."

The major turned to the regiment, and I thought I saw tears in his honest eyes; but his voice was full and strong as usual.

"That I am innocent God knows," he said. "And it is hard to die by the hands of those I love. But discipline must be perserved." Then turning to Callender and the others, he gave the three orders:

"Ready!"

"Aim!"

"Fire!"

I heard the loud report of the guns, but did not hear the bullets strike. I looked at the major, expecting him to fall, but he remained upright. He seemed dazed and bewildered, and did not appear to be hurt. For a moment I could not understand what had happened, and then it flashed across me. Not one of those six men could make up his mind to aim at the major. Every bullet had flown wide, except Amos Callender's; and Callender had not shot at all.

II.

THE REGIMENT'S LAST BATTLE.

The colonel was purple with rage. He drew his pistol, and for a moment I thought he himself was going to shoot the major.

But before he could make up his mind what to do, and before the regiment could realize just what had happened, a messenger rode headlong into the camp and jumped from his horse at the colonel's side. He was splashed with mud from head to foot, and his trembling horse was foaming at the mouth.

"Are you Colonel Hendricks?" he asked.

"I am."

"Well, then, the general sends you word by me that he's left you here alone, and that you're to hold this hill till he comes. The enemy 'll be here in five minutes—I've had a race with 'em, I can tell you. They'll outnumber you three to one, but the general says he knows the Forlorn regiment. He says if you'll hold 'em for two hours he'll have 'em surrounded and beaten. That's all. He'll be here in two hours."

And with that he mounted, waved his hat, put spurs to the bloody sides of his horse and rode off as fast as he had come.

There was not a moment to be lost. The major was sent to the rear with his hands still tied. Preparations were made for instant action. The colonel was everywhere, sending out scouts, drawing up companies, giving instructions to officers. I remember how stern his face looked as he rode up to me and grasped me by the shoulder.

"Your name is Atkins, isn't it?" he said.

"Yes, sir," said I.

"Well, Atkins, you're young and spry. Climb up in that highest tree there and sing out when you see the enemy."

But he had hardly ceased speaking when our vedettes came flying in, shouting that the enemy was coming.

The colonel drew us up in three ranks on the hillside. I was in the rear rank. There was more than one among us who wished that the major was not under arrest. Colonel Hendricks was splendid; but he could not do everything, and oh, it used to be grand to see those two work together on the battlefield! Well, the poor major was out of the fight this time and now we must just make the best of it.

Company after company, the federal troops marched out from the shelter of the trees and drew up in line of battle. When a whole regiment had formed no more companies appeared, and I remember a grin went along our line at the idea of one regiment undertaking to dislodge us from our position.

But the delay was but momentary. Soon more companies issued from the wood; then faster and faster they came, the sun glistening on their bayonets, till there were four regiments drawn up. After these, two squadrons of cavalry.

I could see Colonel Hendricks smile. There was nothing he liked so much as to receive definite orders. He had them this time. He was ordered to hold the hill for two hours, and hold it he would. We all knew we were in for a splendid fight.

The enemy advanced in four columns, keeping the cavalry in the rear. When they came within range they halted and opened fire. This was just what we wanted. Our three ranks gave them a tremendous fire in return. It was glorious to see the sheets of flame burst successively from the first, second and third lines. When we in the third rank had fired the first rank was ready again; and we kept up a steady blaze for ten minutes. Then the enemy fell back slowly to the woods again.

I can see Colonel Hendricks now as he looked when the federal troops began to give back. He was in the seventh heaven. He would have been in the eighth if he could only have given the word to charge, for his fighting blood was up, and he was wild to try the bayonet. But it was clearly his duty to delay the action as long as possible: so he restrained himself, and we waited.

Although we had had the best of it so far, we had suffered considerably. The first and second especially had been thinned out badly, and we had to fill the vacancies from ours, though I was still left in the third rank. I felt pretty bad because Ike Thompson had dropped. I had fought beside him for three years, and now he lay dead with four bullet holes in him. It always took three or four bullets to kill one of our men.

If the colonel wanted to try the bayonet, it seemed that he was not to be disappointed. As soon as the federals could form in an attacking column they set out on the double-quick. They were evidently good soldiers, for they were upon us in almost no time. We could only give them two good volleys before they were at close quarters with us.

They broke through our front rank as though it were made of paper. The second rank held for a while, but that was obliged to give back also; at least on the left where I was. Our right held firm, for the colonel was there, and he managed to keep the men steady.

Our third line would have gone, too, but suddenly we heard a shout and Major Freeland came bursting in among us. How he had escaped no one knew. His sword had been taken from him the night before, but he had snatched a gun from a wounded man in the rear. His voice rang out among the tumult as it had done a hundred times before, and we drank in the sound like wine.

"Down with them! Down with them! Follow me, boys!" he cried, and at every shout a man fell. We took courage, and the federals began to give place. I never saw a man use a bayonet as the major did that day. Every blow was death. The enemy retreated at last, not with the rush like raw troops, but stubbornly and slowly like old soldiers who were coming again. It was a long time before we shook them off completely.

When they had at last withdrawn, what a wretched looking set of men it was that they left behind them! Staggering in groups among the dead of both sides, ragged, almost every man wounded and bleeding, our regiment was indeed forlorn. Not more than a fourth part of us were left standing. I was the only man I could see who was not seriously wounded, and I had a bullet hole in my cheek and a bayonet thrust in my leg. The major's right arm hung helpless, but he had found a sword now and was grasping it in his left hand. The blood was streaming down the col-